



The Florida House of Representatives

Chris Sprowls
Speaker

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

March 3, 2021

Media Contact:

media@myfloridahouse.gov

(850) 717-5780

Florida Literacy and Higher Education Legislation Advances in Committees

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (*March 3, 2021*) — Today, on the second day of Regular Session, legislation dedicated to improving Florida’s child literacy and expanding access to higher education passed their first committee stops in the Florida House of Representatives.

Florida House Speaker Chris Sprowls, R-Palm Harbor, who highlighted these issues during his Organization Session speech last November, thanked the Members of the House Early Learning & Elementary Education Subcommittee and the Post-Secondary Education & Lifelong Learning Subcommittee for swift passage of the legislation.

“Early literacy provides Florida students with the best chance for future success, and passage of this proposed committee bill by Chair Aloupis is a great start,” said Speaker Sprowls.

“Equipping educators and parents with the tools they need to effectively teach reading is an essential part of helping our students discover the joy of new worlds through books.”

First, a proposed committee bill (PCB) sponsored by Chair Vance Aloupis, R-Miami, passed the Early Learning & Elementary Education Subcommittee 16-0. The bill seeks to improve literacy rates and close achievement gaps by providing parents, teachers and administrators with the knowledge, skills and support necessary to effectively teach reading. Under the PCB, literacy issues are addressed at the root by:

- Enhancing literacy skills training for VPK teachers.

- Establishing the RAISE program to identify schools with low reading performance and provide them with instructional planning, professional development and other tools through 20 regional literacy expert support teams.
- Empowering parents to help advance their child's literacy skills at home and in the classroom by enhancing communication between schools and parents.
- Creating a statewide VPK through 8th grade progress monitoring system to help schools identify struggling readers and provide effective interventions.

"All of the parts in this bill are designed to achieve the same purpose: equipping parents and teachers with the resources necessary to ensure that we are improving student literacy and making sure that every child thrives," said Chair Aloupis. "Thank you Speaker Sprowls for your leadership on this issue, and I look forward to the entire Education & Employment Committee considering this bill."

Next, the Post-Secondary Education & Lifelong Learning Subcommittee passed three bills, HB 845, HB 1261 and HB 1273, to expand access to higher education and help improve the workforce to better meet the economic needs of Florida.

"In my Organization Session speech, I talked about the critical role our higher education system plays in Florida's overall success and challenged our members to find ways to expand access, reward students who seek high-demand skills and lure talented young people to our state," said Speaker Sprowls. "I am glad to see these three good proposals have earned early support in their first committee stop, and I believe they will all three make a real difference for students seeking the promise of quality education and fulfilling careers here in Florida."

HB 845, introduced by Representative David Smith, R-Winter Springs, offers nontraditional students, veterans and active members of the military one free online course and a tuition discount on online courses when enrolled in one of the state's online baccalaureate programs. It passed 13-0.

HB 1261, introduced by Representative Jackie Toledo, R-Tampa, encourages state university students to enroll in programs linked to high-demand jobs and in critical workforce need programs by giving students a "Buy One, Get One Free" option for upper-level courses to help meet the critical needs of Florida's workforce. It passed 12-2.

HB 1273, introduced by Representative Patt Maney, R-Fort Walton Beach, attracts talented young students to Florida by allowing those out-of-state students to qualify for in-state tuition at a public university if they are a grandchild of a Florida resident. It passed 11-3.

All three bills will be up next for consideration in the House Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee, then will have a final stop in the Education & Employment Committee before going to the House Floor.

Bills can be viewed here:

[Representative Vance Aloupis' Literacy PCB](#)

March 3, 2021
Page 3

[Representative Toledo's HB 1261](#)
[Representative Smith's HB 845](#)
[Representative Maney's HB 1273](#)

###